NEW BOOKS.

A Useful Book About the French Revolution.

It is a new handbook, embodying in compact form the results of the latest investigations, which Prof. Shaller Mathews has given us in the small volume entitled "The French Revolution" (Longmans). It was high time that the conclusions reached by Taine and other competent authorities should be brought within the reach of young students in our schools and colleges, for hitherto all the current textbooks on the subject have been based upon works long since discredited or at least superseded. What caused the French Revolution? Why was it not developed in an orderly and peaceable way? Why did it not prove enduring? To these and cognate questions different replies must be now returned from those which were given a quarter of a century ago Let us see how these crucial inquiries should be answered in the light of the ripest knowledge and most approved opinions, which will be found condensed in the useful little book before us For convenience the first question should be divided as follows; What produced the revolutionary *spirit* in France, or, in other words, supplied the materials for a conflagration? What applied the torch to those materials? Let us glance at these points in their order. The revolutionary spirit had been brought near to kindling point in France in 1789, not because the constituent elements of the Third Estate, to-wit, lawyers, physicians, bankers, manufacturers, merchants, small tradesmen, artisans and peasants, were worse off in that country than were their counterparts in other kingdoms on the Continent of Europe: on the contrary, they were much better off. This truth is distinctly brought out in Prof. Mathew's handbook. Lavoisier estimated that in 1789 there were 450,000 peasant proprietors in France. Arthur Young computed in 1788 that a third of the soil belonged to them. According to Von Sybel, that is about the proportion of French soil which peasant proprietors now occupy. It is, therefore, ridiculous to attribute to the French Revolution the creation of a peasant proprietorship. Moreover, as Rose has pointed out, "The French peasant, especially in northern France, was far freer socially than the serfs of Germany, Italy and Spain; and in Prussia the peasants had to bear heavier loads even than those of central France." The artisans congregated in French towns were more independent and prosperous than their fellow craftsmen in urban centres elsewhere on the Continent; the mental and moral difference was that they had begun to share the Utopian notions which had permeated the upper strata of society. In other words, the French artisan had begun to think, to feel discontent and to hope for improvement through political change. As for the upper section of the Third Estate namely, the bankers, manufacturers, merchants and shipowners, the immense development of French commerce had made them really, though not, of course, ostensibly, the preponderant element in the State. Concerning the growth of French trade, we need only remark that the exports of 1776 were 309,000,000 francs, as against 192,000,000 in 1748. Conscious of their real importance, these men naturally chafed under the political and social inferiority to which they saw themselves condemned, especially after the species of feudal reaction which set in between 1780 and 1789, when it was decreed that no officer in the regular army should hold even the rank of captain unless his family had been nobles for at least four generations. It was the contrast between the value of the services rendered to the State by the middle and lower classes and the meagreness of the recognition secured by them, which justified the saying of Siéyès: "What is the Third Estate? Everything. What has it been until now? Nothing." To sum up in a paradox this aspect of the situation the French Third Estate was ready for revolution in 1789, not because it was worse off than its congenors in other European countries, but because it was better off. It had gained much: it desired more.

Still, although the materials for a conflagration were ready, the torch might never have been applied, had not popular discontent found an irresistible instrument in the revived States General. The States General would not have been convoked but for the desperation of the Court financiers, who could perceive no other means of averting national bankruptcy. As a matter of fact, France under Louis XVI. was economically convalescent. The deficit was not as great as it had been in 1715, while, on the other hand, foreign commerce in 1778 was double that it had been only fifteen years before. The fiscal problem would have been an easy one to solve, if the Court party would have given a free hand to competent Ministers. Turgot would have solved it; so, again, would Necker, if the royal family and the courtiers would have tolerated a drastic process of retrenchment and reform. As Necker's successors could not carry out retrenchment, and as borrowing was no longer practicable, owing to the forestallment of taxes, they could hit upon no other expedient for replenishing the treasury except a revival of the States General and the procurement of an adequate grant of money from the people's delegates. But the States General was a weapon, and the people were now ripe for using it. The wisest counsellors of the monarchy had been well aware that it was a weapon, and for that reason they had allowed it to rust for nearly two centuries in the armory.

That the French Revolution need not have occurred, and that it would have been averted and either Turgot or Necker been suffered to retain his post and carry out his plans, is evident from the fact that Benjamin Franklin and other keen-eyed foreign observers, who resided in France during the years immediately preceding 1789, were deeply impressed by the increasing prosperity of the country, and never detected any tendency to a political upheaval.

The second inquiry, Why the French Revolution did not proceed in an orderly and peaceable way, may be quickly answered. The English Revolution of 1688 would not have been orderly and peaceable, had the resistance encountered by William III. in Ireland been experienced in England also: much less had Continental armies effected a lodgment on English soil. There would have been no Reign of Terror in France but for the wholesale emigration of the nobles and their consolidation in an army of invasion on the Rhine, but for the attempt of the royal family to escape from France and but for the resolve of foreign Powers to restore the French *ancien régime*, a resolve evinced not only by the despatch of armies across the frontier, but also by the outbreak of a counter-revolution in Brittany.

As for the third inquiry, Why the Revolution did not prove enduring, it suffices to say that, under the Convention and the Committee of Public Safety, France became far more centralized than it had ever been under the monarchy, and that such intense centralization is incompatible with free institutions. Upon this point Prof. Mathews wisely quotes the comment made by Mazzini, than whom no man in our century has better understood the revolutionary spirit: "The error of the French Revolution was not the abolition of monarchy It was the attempt to build a republic upon the theory of rights, which, taken alone, inevitably leads to the acceptance of *les faits accomplis*, upon the sovereignty of the *Ego*, which leads sooner or later to the sovereignty of the strongest *Ego;* upon the essentially monarchical methods of extreme centralization, intolerance and violence and, finally, upon that false definition of life given by men educated by monarchy and inspired by a materialism which, having cancelled God, had left itself nothing to worship but force." M. W. H.

King Alfred.

King Alfred was surely a good King and perhaps a great King. Everybody knows the story of the burnt cakes and of his ingenious division of time by means of a candle. Everybody knows, too, that he welded the wrangling kingdoms of Britain into one England, which, in the course of time has waxed strong and arrogant. Critical historians have cast doubts on the cake story and the candle invention, but England is still there and acknowledges his paternity. It is a thousand years since he died and was buried in Winchester and they are going to celebrate his millenary this year in England in various ways. Consequently, a good many books are being published about him; among them a very short one, "The Story of King Alfred," by the late Sir Walter Besant, who did much to bring on the celebrations, is published by the Appletons. It contains in compact form nearly all that we know about Alfred. The late E. A. Freeman, a great if cantankerous historian, insisted that the King, whom he would call Ælfred, was the most perfect character in history. Mr. Henry Adams, also a thoroughly competent historian, had the misfortune to state, when he was a professor at Harvard, that he had failed to find any evidence of Alfred's perfection, unless it was the fact that he had suffered many years from a complaint common to persons of sedentary habits. Mr. Freeman then jumped with both feet on Mr. Adams, saying that he could never have read the six-text edition of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle; a crushing but irrelevant statement, seeing that that edition sheds no further light on Alfred's character. As a matter of fact, we know that Alfred did many praiseworthy things from a political standpoint, but that the greater part of his constitutional creations belong to Henry II and Edward I.; we know that he was a patron of learning and a friend of the Church, and was therefore belauded in the monkish chronicles. He undoubtedly united England in a union that lasted till the Normans came over and conquered the land, and is therefore entitled to the praise of Englishmen and deserves this year's glorification. There is no evidence, however, of his having been "the most perfect character in history," as very little is known of his personality. He may have been no better than Charlemagne, or Richard III. and probably was not as great a man as Edward I. It is a pity to deprive him of the cake story and the candle story through which he was made known to youth.

Weeds by the Wall.

It is a happiness for any lover of verse to look at Mr. Stedman's "An American Anthology." Especially at a copy of the large paper edition, two volumes, as imposing as a drum major and as respectable as a cattle show. It is possible to resist the desire to plunge into that boundless sea of song. A mere glance at the back and sides of those proper books and tall is filling enough. What a pile of poets! How did any American who ever held the watch to his lyric pulses or shaved the corns of his metrical feet keep out of that collection? So genial and catholic, so compassionate a collector is Mr. Stedman. There are thousands on his list. And yet there are tens of thousands on the waiting list. There are the elevated road poets, for instance, the sweet singers of pills and pickles. Their day will come. The world will not live forever on the sawdust of historical novels. Babes and sucklings will ultimately be fed on something else. The railroad time table can be sung as well as dramatized. There will be a reaction from fiction to verse. Dr. Henry van Dyke's Birdie notes may come to take the place of the "best-selling" novel.

Wise poets will not sacrifice their holdings but wait for the boom. Even in the days of small things there used to be a firm demand for poetry, particularly poetry of the improving, take-one-home-in-a-box Sunday-afternoon-in-the-country sort. Who that is good enough to live doesn't remember with a glow of approbation the prose and verse—and nobody knew which was which—of Dr. Josiah Gilbert Holland, the bard of Belchertown, author of "Letters to the Joneses," and other works which western Massachusetts will not let die? As "Max Mannering," or "Timothy Titcomb," Dr. Holland was professor of moral philosophy in the *Springfield Republican* for nearly twenty years, and as a poet he was as sweet if not as strong as Gen. Sambo Bowles is to-day. "Bitter Sweet," and "Kathrina" used to sell by the thousand. They are fine specimens of the horsehair furniture school of poetry. Even now there must be copies of them on many a centre table in the "spare" rooms in Tyringham, where Dr. Cleveland, Dr. Gilder and other fishers of rhymes and fishes now flourish. Perhaps Dr. Holland's posthumous fame has been overshadowed a little by that of Miss Emily Dickinson, the Bloodgood H. Cutler of Amherst. Col. Higginson issues a volume of Miss Dickinson's verses every three weeks, we believe, and they are much admired; yet they have not the charm or the originality of Cutler's. Think of his "Long Island Cameo:"

John F. Pogue, of Quogue,
Kept a large Newfoundland dog;
Its name was Tray; 'twas fond of fun,
Its license number was 71.

Cutler's poetry has never sold as well as Dr. Holland's and Miss Dickinson's, but patience and shuffle the cards! The big editions will come if the poets will only wait. Meanwhile it will be wise to follow the example of Mr. Madison Cawein—Madison Jefferson Cawein it used to be, didn't it? Mr. Cawein's latest volume modestly called "Weeds by the Wall" (Louisville: John P. Morton & Co.) is published in one edition of only 350 copies. Deduct the review and presentation copies and the actual number for sale will be small. Here is a good idea. Let the editions of books of verse be as discreetly small as the editions of books of fiction are indecently large. Three hundred and fifty copies are too many. Say twenty of the ordinary edition, two large paper, one Japanese vellum. Then poetry may begin to be worth something. It is too common now.

Mr. Cawein's poetical mark was made some time ago, and Mr. Howells and others have duly registered it. He is a student of sound and color, an amateur of words, with some tendency toward preciosity. He doesn't play the game with the rigor that might be expected. He yokes "visions" with "missions, "present" with "crescent," "shadow" with "eldorado," "Emperors" with "stars," "gray" with "Nineveh," all in one poem. He harnesses "dunce" with "runs," "put" with "shut," "Anacreon" with "dawn"—Oh, Lucifer, son of the morning! "Dawn" and "gone," "smile" and "dial," "beaker" and "liquor" are married rhymes whose bans should have been forbidden. "Moon" skewered to "hewn" hurts the ear. "Demesne" glued to "pain" gives a pain. "A moth, like down, swings on the althæa's pistil * * * And in the August lily's cone of crystal A firefly burns." It strikes us that this is inferior to the impressive lines of a hundred years ago:

Oh, Aaron Burr, what have you done?
You've shot great Aleck Hamilton.
You got behind a bunch of thistles
And shot him with a pair of pistols.

But pish to mint and cummin, it may be said. What is the use of wasting breath in trying to match these remnants of rhyme? Hasn't Mr. Cawein the root of the matter in him? To be sure, he has. Hear and remember:

Or catch the glint of hat or vest,
As two dim lovers past him pressed.

This minds us of the lines, taken from what source we know not—was it the *Providence Journal?*

Bright with the bloom of young Romance,
He strode along in purple pants,
And glorious as the golden West
The broidered roses flecked his vest.

Once more into the breach:

The hour is late—
At any rate
She has not heard him at the gate.

Some of our readers may recall Mr. John P. St. John's "At the Lodge:"

The long hours lag;
Her spirits sag;
He cometh not, he hath a jag.

Slowly unrolling our umbrellas, let us hear Mr. Cawein recite "Before the Rain:"

Slowly the tempest gathered. Hours passed
Before was heard the thunder's sudden drum
Rumbling night's hollow; and the Earth at last,
Restless with waiting—like a woman dumb
With doubting of the love that should have clomb
Her casement hours ago—avowed again,
'Mid protestations, joy that he had come,
And all night long I heard the Heavens explain.

We give italics to the last line without extra charge. This picture of a storm as a lovers' quarrel is inexpressibly affecting. "Where have you been all this time?" squalls Hero, her arms akimbo, her nose red with weeping, the lantern almost out and smelling vilely. "But, my dear child, I tell you the Abydos boat was an hour and twenty minutes late!" And all night long you hear the man explain. But now Mr. Cawein has found a tree toad:

Minstrel of moisture! silent when high noon
Shows her tanned face among the thirsting clover
And parching meadows, thy tenebrious tune
Wakes with the dew or when the rain is over.
Thou, troubadour of weiness and damp lover
Of all cool things!

We may be cold to tenebrious tunes, but never to cool things in August. "Where the sweet-breathed mint, that made the brook bank herby?" asks Mr. Cawein with eminent good sense. That bank must be found. It shall be found. We are informed that mint still grows in our old Kentucky home; and many a julep—a silver mug for ours!—may still be sipped in the glimmer of the moon on the beach by the old cabin door.

About Trolleying to Boston.

The extension of the trolley systems in all direction around the cities, so that here in the East they almost connect with each other, has brought about a liking for long distance trolley travelling. As yet, however, persons taking long-distance trips by trolley are almost explorers in the wilds; they leap in the dark. But little guide books appear from time to time, each of them making the travels of trolleyers less dangerous or doubtful. Such a little book is "Trips by Trolley Around Hartford," (White & Warner, Hartford) which is of more importance to the New York trolleyer than its title would indicate. For hidden away in its pages is a full account of how to go from Hartford to New York, and from Hartford to Boston. From these two accounts, it is easy to deduce the route from New York to Boston.

Between the two cities there are only three breaks in the trolley line. One of these is from Portchester to Stamford, 8 miles; the second is from New Haven to Wallingford, 12 miles; the third from West Warren to Palmer, 8½ miles. The course of the trolley is briefly this: From 129th street, by New Rochelle and Larchmont, to Port Chester; by train to Stamford, thence by trolley to Darien, South Norwalk, Bridgeport, Milford and New Haven; by train to Wallingford; by trolley to Meriden, New Britain, Hartford, Thompsonville, Springfield, Palmer; by train to West Warren; then through three towns indicating a typical New England paucity of ideas for town names—West Brookfield, Brookfield and East Brookfield, respectively three miles apart—to Spencer, Leicester and Worcester; Marlborough, South Framingham, Natick, Newton Lower Falls, Newton, and then to Boston! The time occupied on the trolley is twenty-three hours and thirty-six minutes, the distance 273 miles; the fare is $3.72, much less than the cost of going to Boston by rail, or even on foot—unless one's a tramp. The towns along the route are described enthusiastically, though briefly; and the book or rather pamphlet may be commended to those who would a-trolleying go.

A New Record of Current Events.

Few things are more troublesome to get at than accurate statements about matters that have just happened. A week or a fortnight suffices to put the ephemeral accounts of the daily press out of reach or to make the effort to snatch back the important part that has slipped by painful and laborious. Various attempts have been made to fill up this temporary gap in information. The London *Times* publishes quarterly indexes to its columns, for instance, some magazines used to print monthly summaries of events, and these have been periodical, that tried to cover the field, month by month. The latest venture of this kind and, we fancy, the most ambitious, is "The Current Encyclopedia," published by the Modern Research Society of Chicago, of which the first number is before us. The articles are written by a large staff of competent authorities. Many of them are timely. There are accounts, for example, of the expositions at Glasgow and at Buffalo, of the Duke of Cornwall's trip to Australia, of the new East River Bridge and of Edison's storage battery. There are biographies of persons of note, living and recently dead. And there is much solid information on many topics. The name selected for the publication is not a happy one, as it gives a ponderous appearance to what is in fact a magazine of information. Some of the articles, also, are too much like those in encyclopædias, a defect due, probably, to the fact that the first number must necessarily cover much more ground than the month past. An improvement from a newspaper point of view would be the inclusion of short summaries of notable crimes and disasters, great fires and wrecks, lists of persons who have died during the month, and chronological lists of important events. The index will be cumulative for each half year—that is to say, the index for each month will cover the articles of the preceding months as well, a device which will increase the usefulness of the publication vastly. It is to be hoped that usefulness will not be sacrificed to learning in this venture. A monthly encyclopædia is somewhat of an absurdity: a monthly record of current events would be a sensible and useful publication.

Self-Made Verse.

Mr. Wesley S. Bissonnette has written some "Verses" and printed them artistically at his own printing shop in Colorado Springs, Col., as he has a perfect right to do. Mr. Bissonnette's Muse is sentimental and somewhat melancholy with a decided turn for mystery. Like other latter-day muses she takes liberties with the English language at times. Mr. Bissonette, for instance, is seeking for a sugar-bush girl, a quest involving difficulties.

But the hounds bell out in the hunter's dream,
And my blood bays sweet while the thought trails damp.

Whereupon he tells us:

I have seen not her shadow leap out at my side
Nor her black wet eyes, nor her blown black hair,
Save the white throat dreamed of the snow for my bride
And the rain asleep in the dark blue air.
I have seen not her cheek globing out of the mist
In the tender red of the veins of morn,
Nor even at night have our spirits kissed
In the purple back of the amber corn.

A lot of color here, surely, if the epitaphs are nicely deranged. But there is more trouble ahead for Mr. Bissonnette.

I have lost the charm that the great chief brings,
But my heart it burns with the red bird's craze,
Like a hearth where the young wine boils and sings.

I am sworn to a tale that I never can tell,
But it clothes me warm as the ermine's fur;
I am trued to the track by this wild thing's spell.
That must end in the little white ear of her.

The author's meaning somehow escapes us, but we cannot help hoping that he will keep on truing to the track that ends in the little white ear. The elusive sense of Mr. Bissonette's verse is best shown perhaps in a complete poem, appropriately named "Mystery."

Did a shadow fall on the forest tops? Was a feather shed
From a bird? Did a misty stain
Shimmer its rain
When the white cloud vanished in blue depths high overhead?
Did the green deep silence change to a dim strange mood?
Did a tremulous watersprite
Ring into light,
Or a still gleam steal from the subtlest one of the wood?
The white sun sprinkled the moss with a sound of beams;
Like a weird dark whisperer heard,
Some wild thing stirred,
Or a grass blade chimed in the wind and coiled in dreams.

Here undeniably we have a poetic feeling and melody, joined, however, to preciosity and a perverse disregard of meaning. An occasional fine line cannot make a poem. There are but twenty-four pages to the little pamphlet.

The Songs of the Troubadours.

The taste for Provençal literature has its ups and downs. There was a deal of enthusiasm over the troubadours and their songs in the second quarter of the past century and the interest revived a generation back when Mistral became known. The fluctuations in popular regard for the literature have been marked in France, so it is but natural that they should have occurred among English readers as well. Nowadays, though more persons study Provençal scientifically than ever, probably, the language and the literature have fallen into the shade in society. Prof. Lewis F. Mott of the College of the City of New York has written a thoughtful and interesting little book on "The Provençal Lyric" (William R. Jenkins) in which everything is told that the general reader would care to know about the subject. His versions of the troubadour songs are unpretentious; whatever they may lack in poetical finish they make up for in accurate rendering of the originals. It is a curious phase of sentiment and of social life that he describes.

Other Books.

The man who will write an intelligible account of the history and progress of the various South and Central American republics will do a service to humanity. They have been in existence now for about eighty years, and absurd and motiveless as many of their revolutions and wars have been, it surely is not impossible to establish at least the sequence of events and to pick out those occurrences that have been of importance to the world outside the limits of each little State The Latin republics should be of as great importance as many European countries to the citizens of the United States. Our relations to Mexico, Chili, Argentina, Brazil and other States are growing so close that some knowledge of their history and politics will become necessary in the near future. The books professing to give information of them are hopelessly confused as soon as they get away from statistical and geographical statements. We are sorry that this is true also of "The South American Republics" by W. Fisher Markwick, D. D., and William A. Smith, M. A. (Silver, Burdett & Co.) The tangled skein of South American history cannot be unravelled by a haphazard pull at it here and there.

Prof. de Sumichrast is on safer ground in the last two volumes published of the translation of "The Works of Théophile Gautier" (George D. Sproull.) They contain descriptions of travel and criticisms of art, one being "Constantinople" and the other "The Louvre." They are innocuous so far as concerns decency and comprise that portion of Gautier's writing that could be turned into English without great loss. The reader can easily skip the professor's "introductions" and the subject matter of the volumes will probably make up to him for the deficiency of style in the translation.

Asparagus is an excellent vegetable. This summer it stands almost alone in maintaining its good qualities in despite of the weather that has rendered other vegetables and most kinds of fruit tasteless and almost unfit to eat. We are glad, therefore, to find nearly a whole book devoted to it in "The Book of Asparagus," by Charles Ilott, published by John Lane, The Bodley Head. Complete directions are given for the culture and marketing of asparagus and there are chapters on the asparagus as a decorative plant, on its history and the way to cook it. In addition valuable information is given as to sea kale, celery, celeriac, salsify and scorzonera. There are many illustrations. The volume is the first of a series of "Hand Books of Practical Gardening," edited by Harry Roberts.

Madeira was discovered some years ago by Mr. Anthony J. Drexel Biddle and has ever since formed his chief literary stock in trade. He wrote a short account of the island then, which he has now extended to two volumes under the title, "The Land of the Vine, Being an Account of the Madeira Islands at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century, and from a New Point of View." (Drexel Biddle; London, Funchal, Philadelphia, San Francisco.) The work contains much guide-book information about the islands, which it may be difficult to find elsewhere; it is illustrated with many excellent photographs, and is written with a reckless profusion of paper in what we imagine is biddleese Philadelphian.

We have also received:

"An Introduction to Political Economy," Richard T. Ely, Ph. D., LL. D. New and Revised Edition. (Eaton & Mains.)

"Sunset Rhymes." Seth Sturges. (The Bradley-White Company.)

"The Queen's Chronicler and Other Poems." Stephen Gwynn. (John Lane.)

"The Rand-McNally Hand Book to the Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo and Niagara Falls." (Rand, McNally & Co.)

"Casting of Nets." Richard Bagot. (John Lane.)

"Currency and Banking in the Province of Massachusetts Bay." Part I. Andrew McFarland Davis. (American Economic Association; Macmillans.)

"A Woman Alone." Mrs. W. K. Clifford. (Appletons.)

"The Story of Books." Gertrude Burford Rawlings. (Appletons.)

"Out of the Pigeonholes." E. S. Goodhue, M. D. (The George F. Butler Publishing Company, Alma, Mich.)

Even Though You Are Not

going to purchase at present, real estate investors will profit by reading a specially prepared article on Westchester county and the Borough of Bronx in Sunday's SUN, Aug. 4.—Adv.

Student Proctor's Body Found.

ITHACA, Aug. 2.—The body of Percy Proctor, Jr., the Cornell student from Oakland, Md., and Cincinnati, who was drowned at Goodwin's, on Cayuga Lake, last Saturday, was washed to the beach and found by a farmer this morning. It was discovered six hundred yards south of the scene of the accident.

Gov. Tyler at West Point.

WEST POINT, Aug. 2.—Gov. Tyler of Virginia was a visitor at West Point to-day. He arrived here last night and is being entertained at the quarters of Capt. and Mrs. Rivers. This morning at 9 o'clock there was a salute of seventeen guns in his honor. In company with Capt. Rivers and Col. Treat, acting superintendent, the Governor to-day visited the head of the various departments and at 4 o'clock he reviewed the corps of cadets.

To Join North Atlantic Squadron.

NORFOLK, Va., Aug. 2.—The torpedo boats Cushing and Winslow left the Norfolk Navy Yard this afternoon and at 7 o'clock passed out Cape Henry. It is said that they are bound for Newport, R. I., to join the ships of the North Atlantic squadron.